

REMARKS

The indication that claim 23 includes patentable subject matter is acknowledged with thanks. In reliance thereon, the subject matter of claim 23 has been added to claim 1 to place claim 1 in condition for allowance. Claim 1 also has been amended as to form, bearing in mind the criticisms in the Official Action. Claims 2, 4-6, 8, and 10-11 have been amended as to form following the suggestions for amendment to claim 1, and claims 13-23 have been canceled to place the application in condition for allowance.

The Official Action objects to the form of claims 1, 21, and 22 and rejects claims 15 and 17 under §112, second paragraph. Claim 1 has been amended as to form and claims 15, 17, and 21-22 have been canceled. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection and rejection are respectfully requested.

Claims 21-22 were rejected as anticipated by KRETSCHMER et al. 4,772,987 and claims 1-2, 4-12, 14, 16, 18, and 20 were rejected as unpatentable over KRETSCHMER et al. in view of TAKADA 6,435,703. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested in view of the present amendment in which allowable subject matter has been included in claim 1.

The IDS filed on December 24, 2003 complies with applicable requirements for consideration because it includes a search report that includes designations (e.g., "A") that indicate the relevance of the references. This is sufficient for

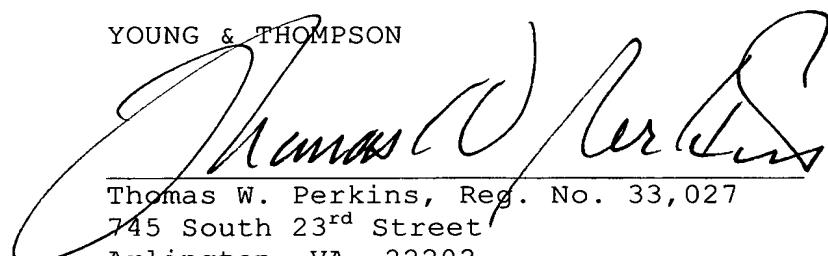
consideration of the references (MPEP §609A(3)). An indication that the references in the IDS have been considered is respectfully requested.

In view of the present amendment and the foregoing remarks, it is believed that the present application has been placed in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

YOUNG & THOMPSON



Thomas W. Perkins, Reg. No. 33,027
745 South 23rd Street
Arlington, VA 22202
Telephone (703) 521-2297
Telefax (703) 685-0573
(703) 979-4709

TWP/lrs